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ABSTRACT

Addressing the issue of desegregation and its implications for cultural pluralism in the school curriculum, this report states that it is in the desegregated setting that the institution through its officials, staff, and curriculum can interact with all children in a manner which demonstrates respect for student and his heritage, recognizes the needs of students, facilitates the acquisition of survival skills, and encourages individual and group problem solving to improve conditions of life for all persons. A brief discussion focusing on the rationale for cultural pluralism in the school curriculum provides comments by persons who have researched school curricula and found them inadequate relative to their treatment of Third World people. A listing of what some state groups are doing about cultural pluralism is provided. A series of recommendations for developing a curriculum that speaks to the realities of cultural pluralism are listed. In addition to modifying the instructional material, other facets of the school environment that must be present if cultural pluralism is to be realized are noted. Some of the possible strategies that the educational units or institutions might employ in institutionalizing the recommendations are delineated. (Author/AM)

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CULTURAL PLURALISM IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN DESEGREGATED SCHOOLS

Chuck Williams

The following presentation addresses the issue of desegregation and its implications for cultural pluralism in the school curriculum. School desegregation cannot be used synonymously with quality education or quality of educational opportunity. The bringing together of students and school personnel whose ethnic backgrounds are different does not in and of itself automatically cause positive modifications in the school curriculum, teaching techniques, how some school personnel perceive culturally different youngsters, nor how students of different cultural backgrounds perceive each other as well as self. The Michigan Civil Rights Commission Community Services Division, in its report, "Defining Equal Educational Opportunity In Michigan", November 1971, states that the real issue remains what happens in the school and in the classroom and how each child is affected. This report further states that it is in the desegregated setting that the institution through its officials, staff and curriculum can interact with all children in a manner which:

1. Demonstrates respect for the student and his cultural heritage.

2. Recognizes and serves the educational needs of every student.

3. Facilitates the acquisition of survival and participating skills in our complex society, and

4. Encourages individual and group problem solving to improve conditions of life for all persons with respect and appreciation for the rights of others.[1]

It is imperative for all school systems, particularly those embarking on school desegregation, to address what perhaps is the greatest educational challenge of all times -- institutionalizing the realities of cultural pluralism in the school environment.

TERMINOLOGY

The following terms are defined for the purpose of effecting a commonality of understanding relative to the school curriculum as it is discussed in this presentation.

1. Curriculum: It is generally accepted that curriculum is defined as being all those experiences encountered by students in the school environment. The following areas are generally agreed by curriculum leaders as being the basic component areas of any curriculum:

   A. Social understanding

   B. Reading and writing competency

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C. Good emotional adjustment

1. Fostering a positive concept of self
2. Fostering a positive concept of others

D. Physical growth

E. Aesthetic activities

2. Culture: The total pattern of human behavior and its product embodied in thoughts, speech, action and artifacts and dependent upon man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations through the use of tools, language and systems of abstract thought.[2]

3. Pluralism: A belief that there are more than one kind.[3]

4. Cultural Pluralism: Relating to or consisting of or containing more than one culture. Also used synonymously with multi-ethnicity.

RATIONALE FOR CULTURAL PLURALISM IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The following brief discussion will focus on comments and documents by persons who have researched present school curriculum and found them most inadequate relative to their treatment of Third World people (highly visible ethnic groups - Blacks, Latinos, American Indians and Asian Americans).

A document titled "Cultural Democracy" speaks very poignantly to the subject of how instructional materials in the State of Michigan have been blatantly remiss in its treatment of Third World People relative to their involvement in the development of this country. The presentations in this document were compiled under the leadership of Mr. Ron Edmonds, then Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction of Michigan with a group of educators who represented: 1.) various ethnic groups - Black, Chicano, Native-American, Polish, Irish, etc.; 2.) various religion groups - Protestant, Jew and Catholic; 3.) varied levels of educational involvement - classroom teachers, college professors, counselors, public schools, parochial schools and the Michigan Department of Education. William Toll, one of the presentors in "Cultural Democracy" documents very concisely the noncompliance of school districts with the provisions of the Social Studies Act of 1966 (Act No. 127) and points out some limitations of the Michigan Department of Education in implementing this act. The Social Studies Act stipulates two major requirements:

1. That when new textbooks are selected they should include a "recognition of the achievements and accomplishments of ethnic and racial groups" and

2. That the superintendent of public instruction should annually report on the textbooks in use to determine whether they did treat minority "achievements and accomplishments" fairly.[4]

Toll, looking at the Michigan State Department of Education's (MSDE) own findings, shows that the secondary social studies textbooks (adopted and used by Michigan school districts) as assessed both in 1968 and 1970 by MSDE did not in their discussion of Third World People make explicit the dignity and worth of the individual as well as failing to discuss the minority population as an integral part of the whole. In addition, Toll notes that the social studies textbooks as assessed both in 1968 and 1971 by MSDE avoided discussing "controversial issues" i.e. race, class structure, economic and educational discrimination, etc. and failed to make connections between minority groups and other historical movements or events. Toll points out what he deems neglect by the MSDE in implementing the Social Studies Act of 1966. He charges that MSDE approached its charge for implementation with limited enthusiasm, indicating that the essence of the department role was to fulfill its minimal legal obligation. Toll feels that such neglect is exemplified in MSDE's failure to take the initiative to survey learning material aside from textbooks, or to suggest specifically what kinds of material might be used to replace textbooks.[5]

John Gibson, in his presentation entitled "Toward Integration through Education: Dichotomies of Purposes and Processes" speaks of "the patronizing curriculum." Gibson states,

> At best, the structure and content of school curriculum are patronizing with respect to minority groups; at worst, the curricula almost completely ignore relationships between minority groups and the past and present of American society. Research findings indicate that in many desegregated schools, no changes have taken place in the structure of curricula. In many instances, no adaptations have been made to accommodate the curriculum to minority group students and where desegregation is not taking place the structure of school curricula for the most part still remains basically white and 'anglo . . . that tokenism in the structure of the curriculum is also manifested in bits and pieces about the contributions of minority groups to this nation's past and present as if those contributions were only bits and pieces.[6]

In brief, the structure of school curricula generally perpetuates the myth that the highly visible minority groups really had little to do with the development of America. It must be noted that when a school curriculum only reflects the anglo aspect of a pluralistic culture, it does not merely damage the self-confidence and self-knowledge of students drawn from the highly visible minority groups, but is in fact, an embezzlement perpetrated on the majority group student that only allows him or her to sanction one language, to learn one perspective of American History, to be exposed to only one musical tradition, to learn about one perspective of American History, to learn about one literature, one kind of art, to see and sanction one kind of world - one that is white, monocultural, unreal and dishonest. The problem of educating Third World people, contends Jack Forbes of the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, is the problem of educating all peoples - providing the kind of learning experiences that are both relevant to the individual and to the full heritage of a nation.[7]

Other authorities who have researched desegregation in its relationship with cultural pluralism in the curriculum are in agreement with those whose works have been previously mentioned. Two of those researchers are Dr. James A. Banks and Dr. Alvin D. Loving. Banks, Professor of Education at Washington State University, who has done considerable research and writing in multi-ethnic studies calls for cultural pluralism in all school curricula. He feels that the the public schools have served mainly to reinforce social class and racial stratification. Yet Banks concludes that it may be the only institution within our society which can spearhead the changes essential to prevent racial war and chaos in America and bring total equality to all of its citizens.[8] Alvin D. Loving, Assistant Dean of the School of Education, University of Michigan, Past President of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, speaks strongly for a culturally plural school curriculum. He says there is no nation in the world with an educational system comparable to the free public schools of the United States. Schools into which all Americans -- Catholic and Protestant, Hindue and Muslem, Jeru and Zoroastrian, Jain and Sikh, those who worship the earth and those who worship the sun. Loving talks about the conglomerate of red, brown, black and white people that come into American schools. A conglomerate that Loving feels should learn the truths of America and its people as they struggled, failed, and succeeded in molding this nation. According to Loving, this learning (in order to have its optimum effect) should transpire in a desegregated setting. One which is characterized by a face-to-face situation of Blacks, Whites, Browns and Reds.[9]

It is as imperative and meaningful, as Banks and Loving have indicated, that the myriad of ethnic Americans see and respect each other as human beings, each with his own rich heritage and rich contribution that is invested in the totality of that which is America. The differences that are inherent culturally in the respective ethnic groups as well as the likenesses inherent in the concept of Americanism must be an intricate and sanctioned part of the school curriculum.

What Some Are Doing About Cultural Pluralism

The previous discussion indicates that the recognition of the need for the realities of cultural pluralism to be addressed in the school curriculum is a growing reality at many levels of our educational society by many people. A small number has proceeded to do something about developing means by which to address this need. The following listing represents some of those groups and what they are attemmpting to do in capsule form:

1. The Detroit Public Schools Intergroup Relations Department evaluates all instructional materials being proposed for purchase relative to ethnic biases. The Department's recommendations to the Detroit Board of Education against purchasing numerous materials because of their biases, for the most part, have been approved.

2. Ann Arbor Public Schools System -- Adopted a program entitled, "The Humaness Document," which provides a rationale as well as programs for modifying the total environment, i.e. school curriculum inservice training, amendment in personnel practices.

etc., so as to make it more capable of responding to those needs inherent in a culturally plural society.[10] A specific part of this program is a curriculum proposal entitled, "The Ann Arbor Multi-Ethnic Curriculum Revision Proposal -- A Two-Year Proposal," which (although having a number of limitations) identifies clearly the need for cultural pluralism in the school curriculum and recommends specific means by which those needs should be addressed.[11] The school superintendent has declared the implementation of the "Humaness Document" the highest priority of the Ann Arbor Public School System.

3. The State of Minnesota now requires training in human relations to be included in all programs leading to certification in education. This stipulation speaks specifically to:

   a. Showing that human relations components have been developed with participation of members of various racial, cultural and economic groups.

   b. Showing that the human relations components are planned to develop the ability of applicants:

      (1.) Understand the contributions and life styles of the various racial, cultural and economic groups in our society.

      (2.) Recognize and deal with dehumanizing biases, discrimination and prejudices.

      (3.) Create learning environments which contribute to the self-esteem of all persons and to positive interpersonal relations.

      (4.) Respect human diversity and personal rights.

4. Maryland State Board of Education -- The Maryland State Board of Education passed a by-law in 1970 (which carries the weight of state statute) directing all public schools in the State of Maryland to modify their school curriculum, e.g. subjects and instructional material so as to reflect the involvement of ethnic minorities in the development of this country so that all youngsters in the State of Maryland might have the opportunity to appreciate the role their own and other ethnic groups played in building America.[12]

   In implementing this act, the following action has taken place:

   a. Criteria has been developed to assess instructional material relative to its treatment of ethnic minorities.

   b. A "Bulletin of Instructional Material" has been developed

which focuses on programs and process for cultural pluralism in the curriculum in all subject areas at the levels of lower elementary, upper elementary, middle school and junior high and senior high. This is made available to all schools.

c. A bibliography focusing on ethnic minorities has been developed. This, too, is available to all schools.

d. Inservice workshops as an ongoing basis are being conducted to equip the school personnel with the skills to optimally carry out the charge of the Maryland State Board of Education.

5. A number of states have taken steps similar to Michigan in attempting to influence publishers to include as an intricate part of their instructional materials the realities of cultural pluralism. Maryland, New York, Nevada, Pennsylvania and Minnesota represent some of those states.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EFFECTUATING A CULTURALLY PLURAL CURRICULUM

The following recommendations for developing a curriculum that speaks to the realities of cultural pluralism are a conglomerate of suggestions offered by myself and other curriculum specialists who have investigated the areas of desegregation of schools and its implication for curriculum modification. It is felt that these recommendations must become a part of the school curriculum if, in fact, the school is to seriously pursue its charge of equal educational opportunity for all pupils. Any school that is desirous of a curriculum that reflects the realities of our culturally plural society, both historically as well as contemporarily, must be committed to having all of its instructional materials adopted and maintained by the following or similar criteria.

1. Evaluated relative to its treatment of Third World groups in terms of: their struggles, contributions, and accomplishments in the development of this country as well as the climate of time during which these occurred.

2. Reflect the realities of the cultural pluralism of our society.

3. Be written by authors representing the many cultures of our society, particularly those authors from Third World groups.

4. Provide evidence that the writers, authors and editors are sensitive to prejudice, stereotypes, and to the use of ethnically biased material.

5. Provide abundant but fair and well-balanced recognition of male and female children and adults of ethnic or members of the Third World by placing them in positions of leadership and centrality.

6. Present a significant number of instances of fully integrated human groupings and settings to indicate equal status and non-segregated social relationships.

7. Reflect clearly in illustrations the identity of Third World people and not the condescending and degrading practice of coloring over white faces.

8. Integrate the Third World people in the various subject areas, so as to eliminate the need for supplemental materials.

9. Analyze intergroup tension and conflict frankly, objectively, indicating how social problems have been and are addressed in our society.

10. Clarify and analyze critically the historical and contemporary climate-of-the-time-factors which have and continue to operate to the disadvantage of Third World people.

11. Make it perfectly clear that the dignity and worth of a human being is inalterably locked to having who he or she is ethnically, religiously, etc., sanctioned by the norm-setting insitutions of our society.

12. Reflect the struggles, contributions and accomplishments of Third World people in developing this country, emphasizing that every human group has its list of achievers, thinkers, writers, artists, scientists, builders and statesmen.

13. Emphasize the multi-cultural character of our nation as having unique and special value which we must esteem and treasure.

14. Provide a fair and balanced treatment of life in contemporary, as well as in rural or suburban environments, so that the child growing up in the ghettos and barrios can also find significant identification for himself, his problems, and his potential for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

15. Provide students with experience to examine their own attitudes and behaviors and to comprehend their own duties and responsibilities as members of a pluralistic society -- to demand freedom and justice and equal opportunity for every individual and for every group.

In addition to modyfing the instructional material, there are other crucial facts of the school environment that must be present if cultural pluralism is to be realized. They are as follows:

1. If a second language or dialect of English is widely spoken in the area, the curriculum should reflect that reality as a basic component, i.e., "English as a Second Language."

2. Reading lists, printed, and audio visual materials effectively addressing cultural pluralism should be made available to all students and parents.

3. The school should capitalize on its rich community resources by making greater use of Third World adults and youth to enhance the implementation of the appreciation for cultural pluralism.

4. Teachers and administrators should be familiar with the dialect spoken in the pupil's home so as to enhance communications both with pupils and with parents. This is significant in building meaningful human relationships with students and parents and helping Third World youngsters to feel positive about themselves.

5. Courses in literature should include readings in the literature of non-white Americans and by non-white authors.

6. Curricula in music should give attention and emphasis to all classes of non-European music, including pre-European contact styles and music of recent origin whether from the United States, elsewhere in the Americas, or Africa and Asia. In schools dominated by Third World instruction, non-European musical forms might well replace or supplement the standard band and orchestra classes, in order to provide a mechanism for enriching contemporary music.

7. Arts and crafts courses should acquaint all pupils with the non-white arts of the Americas.

8. American Indian, Black, Latino, and Asian cooking should be available as a part of the school's programs in home economics and non-European foods should be served in the cafeteria.

9. Supplementary materials utilized in the classroom, as well as library resources, should include numerous brown, black, red and yellow-oriented items (magazines, newspapers, books, phonograph records, films, etc.), in order to provide cross-cultural experiences for all pupils and to provide an atmosphere relevant to the non-white pupil's heritage.

10. School personnel should receive training in Third World culture and history and should have some background in anthropology and/or sociology. Such training should be mandatory and should take place on both a pre and inservice basis.

11. The practices of "tracking" and ability grouping" as well as the use of intelligence and achievements tests should be examined critically to assess their destructive and impediment role of denying Third World students equal protection and dignity and worth as a human being. If any destructiveness or bias is found in any of these practices, they should be discontinued and corrected.

12. Maximum use should be made of techniques which are designed to enhance self-concept.

POSSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATING RECOMMENDATIONS

Each educational unit or institution in every state must assume the responsibility for bringing the realities of cultural pluralism to the school's curriculum. This is imperative whether the desegregation of the schools is realized or not.

The following is a delineation of some of the possible strategies that the educational units or institutions might employ in institutionalizing the recommendations for cultural pluralism in the curriculum:

1. Establish a department or division titled "Curriculum and Cultural Pluralism." This department or division must be endowed with high institutional priority with corresponding budgetary commitment. Generally this department or division would be responsible for:

   A. Overseeing all curriculum efforts of the institution.

   B. Effectuating the realities of cultural pluralism in the institutions' curriculum efforts which are to be guided by a definite timetable.

   C. Provide consulting services to assist other units within the institution and other outside educational institutions in effectuating realities of cultural pluralism in their respective curricula. The staff of this division should be comprised minimally of one representative from each of the highly visible ethnic groups.

2. Work vigorously to achieve as a basic requirement for teacher certification a minimum of 12 hours of academic training in the realities of cultural pluralism.

3. Address with a priority effort to establish as a criteria for continued tenure the acquisition of a minimum of 12 hours of academic training in the realities of cultural pluralism for all degreed school personnel.

4. Adopt the policy of not purchasing any instructional material that is found to be ethnically biased by tested instruments such as the one developed by the Detroit Public Schools Intergroup Relations Division.

6. Establish definite affirmative action programs that will within a specified time result in highly visible minorities being employed in significant numbers in leadership positions throughout the institutions.

7. Assess all standardized tests administered (intelligence and achievement) relative to ethnic biases and discontinue or correct those that are found to have biases.

8. Develop and implement an indepth and ongoing inservice program, one whose length is greater than a day and is sustaining (once per week,

twice per month, etc.) and is free of internal interruptions and conflicts. Such an inservice should include the following or similar program topics: "Institutional and Individual Racism," Establishing a curriculum with the realities of cultural pluralism," Values clarification," Instructional Material and Ethnic Bias," Institutionalizing and Implementing the Realities of Cultural Pluralism," "The Cognitive and Affective Domains," etc.

CONCLUSION:

We can no longer afford the luxury of apathy and haphazardness in our approach to curriculum change. We can no longer afford to operate at a rhetoric level in altering our teacher training programs, nor can we continue to participate in the deceptions that the realities of cultural pluralism cannot or should not exist in the totality of the school curriculum. Finally, those of us who are committed to fostering the kind of change in the learning environment that will generate equal educational opportunity and equal protection under the law, offer these comments: The responsibility for establishing the realities of cultural pluralism in the school curriculum primarily rests with those presently making decisions as to what school curriculum is and has been. We must hold them accountable. We must make certain this responsibility is met with a high level of vigor, commitment, and competence that is equal to none that we have ever seen. Concurrently, we must move to a level of action that will not only confront the educational institutions like they have never before been confronted, but will also provide viable alternative methods and programs which are indeed respective of, responsive to, and meaningful for all learners and trainers.

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